DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 112 830 IR 002 513

AUTHOR Holley, Edward G.
TITLE The Magic of Library Administration.
PUB DATE May 75
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Midwest Academic Librarians' Conference (Columbus, Ohio, May 22-24, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Principles; Administrative Problems; Administrator Responsibility; *Administrator Role; Administrator Selection; *Leadership Styles; Librarians; *Library Administration; Management Development; *Management Systems; Organizational Change; Speeches; Trend Analysis; *University Libraries
IDENTIFIERS Participative Management

ABSTRACT

We are better prepared today to deal with the problems in library administration, because we not only have the basic work of management theorists, but also staffs who are better educated and more interested in participation. During the last 25 years, there have been two strands in library administration. The older, human relations approach allowed individuals to work in productive cooperation. The scientific approach of the fifties and sixties, on the other hand, emphasized rigid measurement, machines, and statistics. However, the latter approach came to libraries at a time when the management field in general was moving back to the humanistic methods of Douglas McGregor and the motivational psychologists. The newer theories make a major contribution to library administration and provide a framework for considering the complexity of forces which are having an impact on administration of all kinds; the thrust toward greater democratization and the historical tendency of Americans to want strong, even authoritarian, managers. The magic of administration comes in reconciling these contradictory trends through a careful analysis of the needs of one's institution and the leadership styles appropriate to meet them. (Author/SL)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED112830

MAC 5/24/75

THE MAGIC OF LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION

Edward G. Holley, Dean
School of Library Science
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

In these days of harassed administrators, whose changing role and bleak outlook have been chronicled by no less prestigious librarians than Robert B. Downs, the late Arthur McAnally, and Robert Vosper, my topic must certainly seem the height of folly. "Magic in library administration? Surely you jest. Who can find adventure, romance, status, rewards, even, heaven help us, satisfaction in library administration today?" The search for new directors for the most famous colleges and universities, to say nothing of the Library of Congress, will bring forth a number of responses from disparaging individuals who respond, "Can we find anyone foolish enough to take it?" Whether or not that augurs well for our library science training programs, or for our professional reputation, no one quite knows. All that we do know for certain is that the post of chief librarian is no longer eagerly sought, nor is it the stuff of dreams upon which ambitious young men and women fasten their hopes.

Not that we are lacking in appreciation for the competent administrator. Many will admit that any individual who can balance competing interests on a campus, cope with static book budgets in a period of fifteen to twenty per cent a year inflation, and cut staff while keeping the doors open, must be something of a magician. Moreover, the white male staff member, wondering why Miss X was promoted and granted tenure when he, a far more qualified person was not, will concede that there is some form of mystery, if not magic, in the ways administrators operate. Yet mystery and magic no longer awe many librarians; they merely make them suspicious that what they don't know may very well hurt them.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

HR 002 5/13

At the same time, search committees, both of staff and faculty, after waltzing five to ten candidates through the ritual of campus visits, and finally making a selection which pleases no one but the candidate chosen, wonder in what kind of witchcraft, if not black magic, they have engaged. Is the search committee process any real improvement on the older method of having just a few key administrators make the decisions by themselves? Such questions are beginning to be raised again as institutions look at the cost of consultative management.

Meanwhile, the department head, who never did have much authority, even in the bad old days of Rensis Likert's leadership category one, the exploitive authoritarian, finds himself or herself castigated as being the number one problem in library administration. For, after all, does not the department head really operate the library? Is not he or she actually in contact with the real world of junior librarians, those brash youngsters turned out by library schools who don't know what they're doing; militant users, ever demanding more and more of scarce time and resources; and library processes which keep the whole bibliographic enterprise afloat and consume most of the library's budget? Not much "magic" there on the firing lines these days, or at least not "magic" that anyone perceives.

Maybe the real problem is that of the speaker, who, having wrestled with the organizational and financial problems of the American Library Association for a year, is now approaching premature senility. At the very least, all would agree, he's fortunate to be uttering this radical thought about "magic in library administration" hundreds of miles from Chapel Hill, safe from his faculty, administrative boards, the Faculty Council, and students, who might well be convinced that his tenure as dean should not be renewed for another five-year term. Perhaps there is no "final solution" for him, except to be hidden away in the attic of Manning Hall for the next eighteen years until his retirement.

Well, so much for fun and games. There are problems in library administration today, and no one even casually acquainted with them can deny their existence. For most of us they represent rather traditional problems of not enough space, or staff, or resources to accomplish the job to which we are committed. Just this week, in working on a library history article, I ran across this statement in William I. Fletcher's Public Libraries in America, published in 1894.

> There is a law affecting the growth of libraries not unlike that of geometric progression. By the principle of noblesse oblige, a library which has attained a certain size is called upon to grow much faster than when it was smaller. Each year's additions result in a good many books which are but beginnings of series to be indefinitely continued; or the enlargement of the scope of the library by the purchase of books in some department hitherto neglected makes it necessary to cover the increased ground every year thereafter. Not long ago the trustees of the Astor Library [now the NYPL] complained that they could hardly use any of their large income for the purchase of really new books, on account of the demands for continuation of series already commenced. So with Harvard University Library, where it is reported that over $7,000 is required annually for subscriptions to serials and for other standing charges entered against the income as liabilities to be met before a dollar can be appropriated for new books.
>
> As our numerous libraries grow, this tendency to demand largely increasing funds and to require larger and still larger buildings gives serious occasion to pause and look the matter over to see what can be done by way of relief (p.116)

Not surprisingly incidentally, Brother Fletcher suggested that library cooperation between libraries in one locality might be a partial remedy. His views come back to haunt us in these days of steadily rising serial costs. That we have not solved the problem, even partially, can be seen in a perceptive essay by Richard De Gennaro, Director of Libraries at the University of Pennsylvania, in the latest issue of Library Journal, "Austerity, Technology, and Resource Sharing: Research Libraries Face the Future," (LJ, 100:917-923, May 15, 1975). As all of us not totally isolated from library finance know full well, the increasing serials budgets are eating us alive and it may only be slightly encouraging to know that the problem has been around since 1894.

Under these circumstances, though, one again raises the question, "How can you really challenge us with magic in library administration? Who wants to try to make slender resources cover impossible demands?" Well, there are still a few of us who do, and I would like to share with you some thoughts on library administration tonight in the hope that the number will grow. For I am convinced not only that there is an urgent need for better administrators, but also that a complex and technological society cannot do without them. On this point there is certainly some subjectivism in my approach. My colleagues will accuse my approach of having been more than a little colored by my good fortune in my career always to have had encouraging chiefs, supportive staffs, and understanding university administrators. Although such a background may have made me a little naive, I confess that there is a magic to library administration. Along with the stresses and strains, also come the rewards and satisfactions, or the "hygiene factors" and "motivational factors" to you behaviorists who are disciples of Frederick Herzberg. I would further add that, despite the problems, we are also better prepared to deal with them than ever, becasue we do have not only the basic work of the management theorists, but also staffs who are better educated, more interested, and less resistant to change.

During the last twenty-five years there have been two strands in library administration, with other types emerging in the late sixties and early seventies. First there was the older, human relations approach with its emphasis upon allowing individuals to work in productive cooperation. Much of this approach was really seat-of-the-pants type administration and had little to do with administrative theory as such. Staffs were smaller, and personal contact and encouragement of professional development could be given directly. There was a conscious emphasis upon individual development, not surprising in view of the focus on individualism in our society. In some ways, one of the most vigorous spokesmen for this point of view was Lawrence Clark Powell, Librarian at UCLA, who sometimes appeared to believe that he achieved all his success at UCLA like Little Orphan Annie, by saving his pennies and being good. Powell filled the literature with praise of simplicity in administration, emphasis upon people, and serving the user as opposed to getting involved with the mechanics of the operation. His statement that, "people are more important than processes", certainly sounds modern and up-to-date. His most recent effort, singing the same tune, can be read in an occasional paper from the University of Arizona, Service or Organization: Two Views - Three Responses, (University of Arizona Occasional Paper, no. 1, (1974)) Now Powell always was a better administrator than he preached, and his disparagement of processes and organization did not result in a poorly run system at UCLA. He was a shrewd and effective administrator, who managed to surround himself with very competent librarians who developed a strong sense of loyalty to him and to UCLA, and whose professional qualifications, as well as personal qualities, were never in the slightest doubt. There was much that was healthy in this approach to librarianship. It combined dedication to one's chosen task, a thorough grounding in library practice and bibliography, and personal relationships with one's users that sometimes we find lacking today. Powell practiced his own magic in library administration to the full and made the UCLA Library one of the great research libraries of the country

The drawback in his approach, particularly with the expansion of staffs and collections, was the suggestion, welcomed by some who were less competent and less personable than many of the UCLA librarians, that all one needed for effective library work was a staff of gifted simpletons. In a lot of ways he was fortunate to retire from administration in 1960 before the crush of large university enrollments, undreamed of financial resources, and staffs of three to six hundred became common for university libraries. In 1960 UCLA had only 213 librarians and a collection of roughly one and a half million volumes. In another dozen years it would double its collections and its staff, and be a far more complex operation than it was during the forties and fifties.

In the fifties and early sixties another strand appeared in library administration, the scientific, where the emphasis was upon measurement, on rigid analysis, flow charts, machines, statistics, etc. Like the true believers in the old school, this newer group thought that the scientific method would save the world. The only problem to its complete success, (according to its practitioners) was the presence on library staffs of individuals trained in the humanities who couldn't cope with the newer world in which ninety per cent of the scientists who ever lived were alive today, or some other astounding, but not very helpful, statistic. Proponents of this newer approach to library administration also made their contribution to the development of our discipline. They believed larger organizations must make use of the latest management techniques, and that hard data, rather than sheer guesswork, were necessary for large enterprises. They reminded us that libraries had to prove their value; that they were more than just "good things," though they didn't deny that libraries were indeed good things and served useful purposes.

Nonetheless, it is fair to say that such a zealous approach unnecessarily alienated not only librarians but a good many users as well, particularly on academic campuses. Moreover, it came at a time when the management field generally was beginning to march to a different drummer, the Human Side of Enterprise of Douglas McGregor, and the motivational psychologists, beginning with Abraham Maslow and including such disciples as the aforementioned Frederick Herzberg. Borrowing some of the older humanistic ideas of management, McGregor and his disciples preached the necessity of examining one's assumptions about man and his relationship to work. Few theorists have been as influential as Douglas McGregor, who urged his colleagues, caught up in the scientific web, to examine their assumptions about people and their attitudes toward work. Out of his writings came the two contrasting theories: "X", that men and women are willful, lazy, capricious, and in need of constant watching; and "Y" that they like work, seek responsibility, and are capable of self-control. Psychologist Rensis Likert followed with suggested radical changes in our approach to leadership styles and set up his famous four categories of leadership: the exploitive authoritative, the benevolent authoritative, the consultative, and participative. In some ways there was nothing philanthropic about this approach. The suggestion that theory "Y" was "soft management" could be countered by saying that an individual who was happy in his or her work would be infinitely more productive. What bothers some of us is that there is also an ethical question of whether or not unscrupulous managers might not use thoery "Y" to manipulate their employees. That wasn't McGregor's aim, of course, and he specifically reacted against that suggestion. The objective of management under theory "Y" was to allow each individual to achieve his or her potential for development and at the same time advance the goals of the organization, goals to which, incidentally, the individual librarian would have input. If you want a quick summary of all this I recommend a stimulating article by Marvin Weisbord in the January-February, 1970, issue of Think. Anyway, out of this ferment of administrative theory emerged concepts of

"participative management," "collegial governance." and other terms now familiar in library literature. Whether we acknowledge it or not, we are very much indebted to the McGregor and his fellow theorists for their contributions to our evolving library management theories.

Many librarians, of course, have applauded these newer managements concepts and find that they have a lot to say to us. As Laurence J. Kip remarked in a bibliographical essay, "Management Literature for Librarianship," in 1972 (LJ, January 15, 1972), "This is particularly true as such doctrines emphasize better communication, wider participation in planning and decision making, and more use of democratic methods." (p. 158) As often happens with the introduction of new ideas, however, (and the scientific method is a fine example), there is a tendency on the part of some to see one method, or one skill, or one style as basic for every institution and every individual. Moreover, a good many staffs toss around phrases like "participative management" without understanding what they really mean, or what demands they are likely to make upon the librarian. Perhaps it is only part of our humaneness that we see theories as they can apply to our own benefits and status rather than the contributions they are likely to require from us.

Nonetheless, I do believe that the newer theories make a major contribution to library administration, and they provide us with a framework in which we can consider the complexity of forces which have an impact upon administration of all kinds. This is no less true of other supervisors in the library than the director. If the director's role must change in this relationship, so must the role of every other supervisor, whether the bookstack superintendent, the head of circulation and reference, or whatever. For in addition to some new techniques for problem solving, the theories involve more staff participation in deciding upon the goals and mission of the library. Still it's a fair assumption that new theories won't solve all our problems of declining budgets, lack of understanding of the library's

role in the educational process, and other problems. Nor will they change some of the individuals who are still administrators in libraries. To quote Kip again:

> Whatever his devotion to books, a library administrator is unlikely to change his administrative style very sharply through reading. Contemporary management literature surely will not reform the autocratic or aristocratic leader, the manager who spends his time on peripheral matters, or the complete traditionalist. It will, on the other hand, reinforce library managers and staff members who seek wider participation in decision making, innovations in management practices, reassessment of goals, and mastery of a wider range of managerial tools. (p.160)

In my opinion, only library leaders can take such management practices and apply them with success to their libraries. To do so effectively, one needs to be aware, it seems to me, of two thrusts in our society which influence all of our institutions. First is the thrust toward greater democratization, which in some ways represents a nostalgic longing for the simple New England town-meeting concept, and a less complex society. We see this in all our institutions and governmental structures. The second is the historic tendency in America to want strong leaders and managerial types. In many ways these thrusts are contradictory, but the emphasis in an organization, i.e. the magic of administering it, depends upon analyzing very carefully the type institution in which one operates and the style of the individual in the various leadership roles. For instance, it is tough to introduce a participative library organization into a campus operated by an authoritarian university administration. Moreover, one cannot, in a complex society, stop every moment to consult with each individual about every decision.

Under these circumstances, a key question to which most search committees rarely have the answer is "What type executive do you want?" Alas, I find that many institutions these days don't really know. We're in a transitional phase right now, in which many of the former "giants", most of them benevolent authoritative in Likert's terms, are passing from the scene. One of my students recently completed a master's paper comparing the background and experience of ARL directors appointed in the late forties with those appointed recently among that group. Both periods were times of considerable turnover at the top. His conclusions are interesting and I pass them along for whatever they're worth. Even with the changes in theory we've been discussing, if you want to be an ARL director these days, you had better start early as a librarian, earn a library science degree, spend your career in academic librarianship at increasing levels of administrative responsibility, and worry about it if you have reached the top by age 46. What John Darling discovered is that the pattern of administrative success has become more standardized and institutionalized over a twenty-five year period. What may surprise you is that fewer directors come from other disciplines to directorships in research libraries, and fewer hold earned doctorates. Whether or not these newer directors will cope with the demands of their constituencies better than their predecessors only time will tell.

Most institutions in this transitional period want strong, aggressive leadership at all levels, but also more group participation and democracy in decision making. Those two aren't always compatible. The question we have to pose is "How we can institutionalize the process of democracy, or at least consultation, and at the same time continue to give administrators the flexibility and credibility they need to perform well?" There are, after all, many publics to be satisfied, not just librarians and the supportive staff. If, as Hugh Atkinson has said, "the function of a university library is to make people happy

bibliographically," that involves more people than library administrators and staffs. It also involves legislators, coordinating boards, trustees, chancellors, to say nothing of faculty and students.

In order to perform effectively as a library administrator, or supervisor, in the next few years, one will have to realize that the contemporary, world of higher education and librarianship does not place a high premium on authoritarian, directive leadership. Authority will be dispersed and tempered by countervailing forces. As Chancellor Archie Dykes has noted in an essay concerning the university presidency, "the conditions surrounding the academic presidency today require men with talent for getting things done collectively - men who can secure consensus through consultation and mediation." ("Presidential Leadership in Academe," School and Society, April 1, 1967). That does not mean, of course, the absence of leadership, but a different kind of leadership, which includes achieving goals and objectives through consultation, and persuasion, and not through one's mere holding of a top position, whether that position is director, assistant director, division head, department head, or departmental librarian.

In many ways this will mean, for most of us, changing our conception of what library administration is. If the charismatic, autocratic style of leadership is no longer tenable, then a redefinition of the role and scope of administrator is clearly in order. For if an administrator cannot impose his or her will upon the organization, then the way they operate with agencies external to the library as well as internally must change. How long can one operate effectively in such a post? An intriguing idea, not yet thoroughly explored, is that of term appointments for library administrators. Another student of mine, Davenport Robertson, has recently studied this problem in a paper on "Post-Administrative Options for University Library Directors." As Mr. Robertson concluded, the chief problem with term appointments is that of role and salary, but he does not see either

as insuperable. Moreover, he does not see the new leader either incapable of nor unable to make choices. He quotes approvingly from Harlan Cleveland's The Future Executive that the "future executive will be making the most choices - whom to bring together in which organizations, to make what happen, in whose interpretation of the public interest. Those who relish that role will have reason to feel free, not in the interstices but right in the middle of things."

That seems to me to provide all of us with a real challenge, for I speak not of directors alone when I talk about the magic of administration and implementation of new theories. Most librarians assume a leadership role at some period in their career. If we can look upon leadership as providing opportunities for consensus making, for allowing our colleagues to develop their full professional potential as we do ours, for defining objectives with the consent of the group as a whole, for problem solving where the best minds interact with each other, that it seems to me is far better than even the most benevolent authoritarians for whom some of us have worked.

At the same time this does not mean paralysis in decision-making but taking major steps only after serious consultation. Last year I said to one of my colleagues, "we have democracy in decision making at Carolina but we do not have chaos!" For those not accustomed to operating in the consultative mode, it may seem chaotic. But that is only so when it is not clearly understood that decisions must finally be made which may not be what anyone of us would personally recommend. Presumably most decisions are made after recommendations in which all participate. The Committee on Tenure and Promotions makes recommendations after careful study. The full professors assembled then give the dean their judgement. Finally, the dean must decide to accept or reject this advice. If the advice is wholly negative, he has no problem. In 99 per cent of the cases he had better not approve it over faculty objections. In cases where everyone

is ambivalent, he is stuck with making the decision himself. In cases where the recommendations are wholly positive, he had better think long and hard before saying "no" and he'd better not say "no" to often under these circumstances if he wishes to maintain any credibility with his faculty. And everyone must also understand that few library or School decisions are final. Positive recommendations must then go to university-wide committees, in our case the Committee on Instructional Personnel and the Chancellor's Advisory Committee, before going to the Trustees. It's a long and complicated process, and gloriously consultative. Most of the time the process seems to result in good decisions.

What we have done, it seems to me, is to open up the whole process of decision-making in a much more realistic way. There is no question that chief administrators, whether they be chancellors, or deans, or vice presidents, or directors, or department chairmen, or librarians, cannot continue to make all the decisions the way Charles W. Eliot could at Harvard in the forty years of his presidency. Shortly after Eliot became president, a faculty member was asked why the faculty had to accommodate to so many changes. Mr. Eliot responded quietly, "Because there is a new president." No university president could make such a statement today, and the few who are foolish enough to try almost invariably wind up with an outraged constituency. The colleges and universities in which we are privileged to serve are much larger and more complex, and they also encompass competing sources of power. That is no less true of directors, or other library administrators, just assuming their new administrative position.

In fact, the best thing any new administrator could do before he or she begins to make decisions would be to read Weisbord for a general overview of modern management theories and that recent excellent article by Jeffrey A. Raffel, "From Economic to Political Analysis of Library Decision Making," in the November, 1974, College and Research Libraries. For what we are saying, are we not, is that decision-making is a political process and that the practitioners of the art of administration must find a way to mobilize the

political process if they would achieve their goals. We must be aware of the needs and aspirations of our library faculties as well as the university faculties, the students, the administration, and the various boards which ultimately have legal control over our operations. As the issue of AAUP Bulletin for Autumn, 1973, on "The Politics of Public Higher Education" pointed out so clearly, the ivory tower was never less isolated from society and must be prepared to recognize external pressures if it is to deal with its major problems effectively.

Unfortunately for many academic libraries, their staffs are not equipped for dealing with problems within the political context. They have neither the training for it nor the inclination. As Kip remarked, "One characteristic of libraries is that tension is always present because librarianship consists of two elements, bibliography and management. ...Many bibliographers, of course, eventually become managers. While it should be easy for such managers to identify with bibliographers on the staff, they do not always manage to retain that identity." (p. 158) Thus we find administration inimical to the reasons most of us came into the library profession in the first place. And like our academic colleagues we have felt ourselves removed from the political context which our public librarian colleagues have taken for granted for years. So we need to add to our skills not only the human relations approach of the earlier librarians but also the economic analysis of the scientific managers and the political analysis of the behaviorists.

"Who indeed is equal to this task?" "Can we find anyone foolish enough to become an administrator so that we can continue our splendid bibliographic efforts?" Probably not, if we want that individual to do all the directing, and politiking, and speech-making, and leave us alone. For the library administrator cannot leave the staff alone. They must be brought into the process, sometimes despite their enormous reluctance, and asked to assume their share of the responsibility not

just for their own advancement but for that of their colleagues and for the library organization as a whole. To encourage a staff to move in this direction takes skill, and talent, and leadership of a high order.

What it does not take is someone who operates in the grand imperious style. William Warner Bishop and Phineas Laurence Windsor would be as out of place in today's society as Charles W. Eliot, who spent forty years as President of Harvard, or Nicholas "Miraculous" Butler who spent roughly the same amount of time as President of Columbia. They made their contributions and we should be grateful, but "new occasions teach new duties."

There is little doubt in my mind that librarianship has both younger and older professionals who are adaptable, flexible, and capable of leadership in the newer style. The "magic of library administration" in this context will not involve saying to this one "come," and he comes, or "go" and he goes, but the talents Chancellor Dykes mentioned of persuasion and mediation, to say nothing of those mentioned by Harlan Cleveland of deciding whom to get together for what purpose to decide on what major problem. That is a challenge which seems to me compelling for academic librarianship today. For, as Chancellor Dykes said of the academic presidency

> [leadership] must be exercised in keeping with the characteristics and the cultural expectations of the present; it must be manifested in less dramatic, less romantic, and more muted form. But if the president has a strong will to lead and is willing to commit himself and his energies to that objective, he indeed can be an educational leader, indeed can play a decisive role in formulating goals and objectives of the institution toward them. But it probably will not be said of his college or university, "here is the lengthened shadow of a great man."

That is the "magic of library administration" for today, and I suggest to you, in conclusion, that it is not beyond the capability of those who want to work at making the academic library a more effective part of the educational process.